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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: IRAN, AFGHANISTAN, GERMANY;Berlin

- ¶1. Lead Stories Summary
- ¶2. Iran) Missile Tests
- ¶3. (Afghanistan) Elections, ISAF
- ¶4. (Germany) Aftermath of Bundestag Elections

#### ¶1. Lead Stories Summary

All media led with stories on the aftermath of the Bundestag elections, focusing on the plans by CDU/CSU and FDP to quickly start coalition talks and SPD Chairman Mntefering's slow retreat from party leadership. Editorials focused on many aspects of the elections, particularly on the situation of the SPD after the devastating election results for the party.

#### ¶2. (Iran) Missile Tests

Many media reported on "Iran's Threatening Gestures" (Frankfurter Allgemeine headline), saying that, "prior to the nuclear talks, Iran provokes with tests of missiles that could reach Israel" (Sddeutsche).

Sddeutsche (9/29) reported: "Iran again fired Shahab-3 and potentially Sejil missiles on Monday. With this, Tehran increases the tensions prior to the planned talks with the P5 and Germany over its controversial nuclear program.... The visible efforts of the U.S. are supposed to increase pressure on Iran to give a clear signal during the talks on Thursday that the government is prepared to start negotiations over its nuclear program. Israel and the U.S. did not rule out a military strike."

Under the headline "China's turn," FT Deutschland (9/29) editorialized: "The message is clear: behind the recent Iranian missile tests stands the determination of Iranian President Ahmadinejad to broaden the confrontation with the West to a maximum. Only optimists really expected Iran to make a move during the talks with the P5 and Germany on Thursday. However, the targeted military provocation at this

moment can only mean that the group of six might as well cancel the meeting with the Iranian negotiator. Just as it was right for Obama to start talks with Iran, it is now clear that Tehran is not interested in serious talks. Not the group of six, but the UN Security Council would be the right place for the talks. The UNSC must quickly agree on tougher sanctions against Iran. Ahmadinejad's threats are actually helpful because Iran is about to put off its remaining allies abroad. Until now, Iran could rely on Russia and China to counter the efforts of the West to embark on a tougher course against Iran. At least the Russians have now suggested that they are getting impatient with the Iranians. Even those who have officially doubted the military nature of the program are now feeling deceived by Ahmadinejad. Given Russia's change of policy, it is now China's turn. If the Chinese are indeed ready to bear their international responsibilities, then they will stop obstructing the way for tougher actions against Iran."

Under the headline "Russian Mistrust," Frankfurter Rundschau (9/29) editorialized: "The group of six might attend the upcoming meeting with the Iranian negotiators more united than ever before.... The Russian confidence in the Tehran leadership seems to have been seriously undermined.... Information the U.S. recently provided is important.... This impressed Medvedev. By the way, China has also been briefed extensively. State leader Jintao still controls his facial play... The Russian position will be: negotiate as long as possible, including the threat of sanctions."

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### 13. (Afghanistan) Elections, ISAF

Sddeutsche (9/29) headlined: "NATO stands by Karzai" and said in its intro: "Describing Karzai's election victory as dubious is an understatement..... His challenger Abdullah Abdullah, who also stands accused of minor election frauds, called the election results a bad joke, noting that the president systematically falsified the elections."

Under the headline "The time is short," Frankfurter Allgemeine (9/29) analyzed: "The calls of the ISAF commander Mc Chrystal to increase the number of U.S. troops in Afghanistan in connection with a warning of a likely defeat has given a new urgency to the debate about the allies' strategy and tactics in this conflict. President Obama's statement that the American nation is tired of this war has the impact of a long-expected shock.... For Europeans, it is now clear that Obama will not walk into the election campaign at the domestic front with an open flank in Afghanistan."

### 14. (Germany) Aftermath of Bundestag Elections

All papers carried lengthy election analyses and reports on the future strategies of the parties. The papers again focused on what the outcome of the election means for domestic policies and only one paper, Handelsblatt (9/29), dealt with the effects the election may have on foreign policy. The daily wrote under the headline: "FDP Turns Disarmament into a Crucial Issue," "FDP leader Westerwelle remained silent about future foreign policy...but he is becoming concrete on disarmament policy and by emphasizing this choice, he is stressing which profile the FDP wants to pursue in foreign policy. Westerwelle defined the complete withdrawal of the last U.S. nuclear weapons from Germany as a short-term goal of the new coalition government. Westerwelle said that, following President Obama's disarmament initiative, it would only be consistent if Germany made its contribution to this initiative. During a news conference in Berlin a Ukrainian journalist asked Westerwelle whether he would pursue a new policy towards Russia, Westerwelle said that he would prefer to postpone the answer to this question for another news conference. 'But this question is understandable,' the daily wrote, because "the FDP is the only party that is supporting Ukraine's accession to the EU."

ARD-TV's Tagesthemen (9/28) commented: "Angela Merkel said: 'I want to be the chancellor of all Germans.' This was the first pillar which she rammed into the ground against the FDP. And North Rhine-Westphalia's Minister President Rüttgers promised on TV that the CDU/CSU/FDP coalition would not impose any radical measures on Germans. This statement was obvious, for he wants to remain minister president in NRW in May, 2010. But the FDP has many reasons not to be too radical either. The FDP, too, does not want to risk losing its majority in the Bundesrat because of a defeat in the upcoming NRW state parliament elections."

Norddeutscher Rundfunk radio (9/28) broadcast the following commentary: "The majorities are clear: A coalition of the CDU/CSU and the FDP will dominate the Bundestag and is very likely to have a majority in the second chamber, the Bundesrat--at least until the state parliament elections in NRW. This is also the reason that we do not have to be afraid of radical change of course, but can expect a policy based on circumspection. Now the chancellor must demonstrate that she is able to lead. This is not, such as the grand coalition, a coalition at eye level, but a coalition among unequal partners. This means an end to the presidential

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chancellorship. Her mandate now will be to sharpen the profile of the CDU/CSU and to show her true colors."

Under the headline: "Merkel's Power," Sueddeutsche Zeitung (9/29) opined: "Merkel will patch up a coalition government which, in her opinion, must be based on three pillars: First, the stability of her power; second, the stability of her power, and third, the stability of her power. The better she is in achieving this, the freer she will feel also with respect to fulfilling the mandate of the voters, i.e. to successfully govern.... Following these elections, Merkel is stronger than is evident in the mere numbers. With Guido Westerwelle, Merkel has a partner who will be very careful not to forfeit the bit of power he will now have. But there is one thing the chancellor is lacking: an opposition that corresponds to the most important requirement of a democracy, namely to be able at any time to replace the government. This deficit alone stresses the full dimension of Merkel's victory."

In the view of Frankfurter Allgemeine (9/29), "Angela Merkel did not inadvertently say that she wanted to be the chancellor of all Germans, and on Monday, she said that the interests of labor and capital would again be well balanced under her leadership. Obviously, she does not want to allow the opposition to put her in a 'neo-liberal' corner. Nevertheless, she promised that there will be 'more of the CDU/CSU' in the new coalition than there was in the old one. More of the CDU/CSU? The curtain has now been raised but many questions still remain open."

Frankfurter Rundschau (9/29) judged: "It is by no means guaranteed that the new trio of a battered CDU with a hyper-nervous CSU and an FDP that is brimming with self-confidence will really turn out to be stable in everyday political business. With clear words Chancellor Merkel rejected any corrections of previous CDU/SPD decisions and assured that fundamental FDP demands for social policies would not be implemented with her at the helm, because her popularity is based on her balanced policy as chancellor."

According to Financial Times Deutschland (9/29), "the moment of truth will come for Chancellor Merkel in the coalition talks with the FDP. Then Merkel will have to stand for the political projects that have priority for the CDU/CSU. It may sound paradoxical, but Merkel can and should now demonstrate her leadership strength the same she did before the election: by understatement. Merkel will certainly do the country and trade and industry a favor if she continues her policy of a quiet hand for the time being and not allow the FDP and the

CSU to tell her what she has to do. The difference to the time before the election is that Merkel needs a lot of strength now to reject radical reforms."

Handelsblatt ((/29) wondered: "Will Merkel now put aside her cotton buds and put on her boxing gloves and fight as a resolute reformer for a clear economic policy course? Those who closely listen to the chancellor have their doubts. Even after the closure of all polling stations, all her speeches indicate the fearful promise that the social balance will be maintained. Merkel continues to distribute tranquilizers. Has the notion left the chancellor that the state referees the market without seeking to control it now that she can no longer hide behind the SPD? Election victory or no, Merkel the suspicious, continues to remain cautious."

Regional daily Rhein-Neckar-Zeitung of Heidelberg (9/29) opined: "Angela Merkel is now required to act as an animal trainer. She must keep the destructive potential of the CSU

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at a low level, rein in the ambitious proposals of the FDP and debunk the notion that she is only chancellor by the grace of Guido. These will be exciting times, but they may result in fresh and better policies in the coming years after the leaden times of the grand coalition. If someone can turn this chance for success into reality, then it is Angela Merkel."

MURPHY